

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee;

March 5, 2007

My name is Nathalia Marquis and I'm from Helena, Montana. I have had four documented brain hemorrhages, the last one in 2005, which left me with a catastrophic Frontal Lobe brain injury. Prior to this, I was an ordained minister, and worked as a personnel manager, supervising over fifty employees. I was a single working mother suddenly slammed into the terrifying world of brain injury with no insight, understanding or assistance for an entire year after my discharge from the hospital. As a result, everyone suffered. There is a commercial on TV, I'm sure you've all seen, that asks "Who does depression hurt? The answer : "It hurts everyone". Well, no truer words could ever be spoken about Brain Injury. " Who does brain injury hurt? It **literally** hurts everyone.". It not only hurt myself, my family and friends, but without any insight or compensatory skills for dealing with brain injury, I often lashed out at total strangers .Why? Because with a brain injury even minor infractions or annoyances can seem monumental. Not one Physician warned me of the possibility that I would be left with a brain injury that would strip me of my identity, and leave in it's wake, an emotional landslide too devastating to describe in so little time. This is an excerpt of an article from Seattle's Head Injury Hotline that perfectly describes just one of many ways this brain injury has affected me.

"The loss of self is often the real tragedy of brain injury. It is seldom addressed by the medical profession yet it is a loss so profound that many never recover from it. Brain injury strips away a lifetime of learning, of personal identity, and personal power. The loss is a soul shattering experience, intense and intimate. It is so intimate that society as a whole averts its eyes and closes its ears to the pain, and despair of such a naked soul."

So In my own words again, Brain Injury is **not** just the individual's problem, it is society's problem. It affects everyone. How long can we turn a deaf ear to the pain and devastation of brain injury which is no respecter of persons . It can happen to anyone at any time. Please don't wait until it happens to you, or someone **you** love, in order to wake up to it's painful, far reaching consequences.

Since Montana has the second-highest annual Traumatic Brain Injury fatality rate in the United States, not to mention those of us who have survived, but have been permanently affected by it, I believe Montana should also rank the highest in excellence to deal with it. We need better Brain Injury Resources and facilitation. We need awareness, education, prevention, intervention, and the necessary funds and programs to address this devastating disability that affects every one of us in one way or another.

Thank you for listening,

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